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Bryan Wilkes
(202) 586-7371

# 220 Radioactive Sources Removed From Georgia School

***Material that could have been be used for "dirty bombs" is now safe and secure***

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) announced today the removal of 68,000 curies of radioactive cobalt-60 from the Neely Nuclear Research Center at the Georgia Institute of Technology campus in downtown Atlanta. The successful operation was recently completed and the material has been secured.

The 220 sealed sources of cobalt-60 were recovered in three separate loads by the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) for NNSA's Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI) program and sent to the Nevada Test Site for permanent disposal. The material had been used by the school for research in the fields of materials science, genetics, radiation shielding, and biological materials processing, and was housed in a 15-foot deep pool that provided shielding. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory also provided support for the operation.

NNSA Administrator Linton F. Brooks commended the operation, saying it was important to keep dirty bomb material safe and secure from terrorists. "It is critical to our national security efforts that excess and unwanted radiological sources be disposed of in a responsible manner. Together, NNSA and two of our national laboratories have safely disposed of material from Georgia Tech that could have been used for dirty bombs. We will continue aggressively working to keep this kind of material out of the hands of terrorists," he said.

One of NNSA's top priorities is removing and securing materials that pose a safety hazard and national security risk. To date, NNSA has recovered almost 12,000 radiation sources and placed them in safe and secure storage away from the public and environmentally sensitive areas. The effort is managed by the LANL Nuclear Nonproliferation Division. Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the Bush administration accelerated the recovery of unwanted radioactive sources and material that could be used to make a dirty bomb.

LANL supports the GTRI program by assisting in the recovery and disposition of excess, unwanted, and/or abandoned radioactive sealed sources and other radioactive material. Sources containing radioactive plutonium, americium, cesium, cobalt and strontium have been recovered from medical, agricultural, research and industrial locations throughout the nation.

Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear energy. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, reliability and performance of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile without nuclear testing; works to reduce global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad.

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